



FY 2016

Annual Report

A yearly report on the Rural Maryland Council, an independent state agency located within the Maryland Department of Agriculture

TO OUR FELLOW MARYLANDERS

We are pleased to share with you our Fiscal Year 2016 Annual Report.

2016 was a great year for the Rural Maryland Council (RMC)! We were successful in our efforts to attain funding for the Rural Maryland Prosperity Investment Fund (RMPIF) for the first time! On March 29, 2016, the Maryland Legislature passed the Fiscal Year 2017 State Operating Budget, which included funds, for the first time since its creation in 2006, to support RMPIF, a key step forward in addressing disparities in the State's rural areas. We are confident that there will be an excellent return on the investment in our rural communities as we strategically invest those resources.

The RMC is grateful to Governor Larry Hogan for including the funds to support the RMPIF, and to the Maryland House of Delegates and the Senate for their support. We would like to especially highlight the role of the Senate Budget and Taxation and the House Appropriations Committee members.

To highlight some additional successes from this past year, we:

- Conducted an informative and engaging Rural Summit with over 230 individuals from all across our state in attendance;
- Supported the successful passage of Program Open Space-Transfer Tax Repayment-Use of Funds (HB462). For the first time since its inception, the program will realize full funding and in Fiscal Year 2018 will be allocated \$5 million for implementation.
- Developed a strategic plan for the Council which will move us forward over the next three years as we achieve our primary goals to: encourage healthy, connected communities throughout Rural Maryland; support the development and growth of vibrant economies; foster stewardship of Maryland's natural resources and further develop and undergird the RMC as an organization.

Looking Ahead

In addition to adding new partners to our Board, we took some of our "not-so-new" collaborations to new heights! We are partnering with the Maryland Rural Health Association to support the completion of a comprehensive "action-igniting" Rural Health Plan for Maryland, as commissioned by the State Office of Rural Health (MD DHMH). We will also be working on a Transfer of Wealth Study to determine the potential economic impacts of transferred wealth from rural communities to urban counterparts.

The Rural Maryland Council has exciting events and activities planned for FY 2017, and we solicit your support and participation. We need you! Please do reach out to our office or members if there is a way that we can assist you. We know that as the Rural Maryland Council collaborates all across our beautiful state, Maryland becomes the best place to live, work and play!

To our continued success;



Doris Mason
Chair



Charlotte Davis
Executive Director

Cover photo: Casselman Bridge in Grantsville, Garrett County

WHO WE ARE

The Rural Maryland Council's (RMC) mission is to bring together citizens, community-based organizations, federal, state, county and municipal government officials as well as representatives of the for-profit and nonprofit sectors to collectively address the needs of rural Maryland. The RMC is an independent state agency located within the Maryland Department of Agriculture. We provide a venue for members of agriculture and natural resource-based industries, health care facilities, educational institutions, economic and community development organizations, for-profit and nonprofit corporations, and government agencies to cross traditional boundaries, share information, and address in a holistic way the special needs and opportunities in rural Maryland.

Our goals are to:

- Encourage healthy, connected communities throughout Rural Maryland through convening of stakeholders, education, public relations, and advocacy;
- Support the development and growth of vibrant economies in Rural Maryland;
- Foster stewardship of Maryland's natural resources;
- Maximize RMC outreach, resources and mission through financial and organizational development.

Our vision for the RMC is where we see a future where all of Rural Maryland is prosperous with thriving resources, vibrant economies, and healthy, connected communities.

RMC Officers

Chair (January – December 2016), Representing Upper Shore Regional Council:

Ms. Doris S. Mason, Executive Director, Upper Shore Regional Council

First Vice Chair, Legislative Committee Chair, Representing District 5 – Caroline, Dorchester and Talbot Counties:

Mr. Josh Hastings, Policy Manager, Eastern Shore Land Conservancy

Second Vice Chair, Representing Maryland Department of Agriculture:

Mr. Matthew Tefteau, Manager of Government Relations, Maryland Department of Agriculture

Immediate Past Chair, Chair (July – December 2015), Rural Maryland Prosperity Investment Fund Committee Chair:

Mr. Scott Warner, Executive Director, Mid-Shore Regional Council



Governor Hogan with RMC Executive Director, Charlotte Davis, right, and Program Administrator, Meredith Donaho, left, at the 2016 Maryland Association of Counties Conference.

RMC EXECUTIVE BOARD

Rodney Glotfelty , District 1 – Garrett, Allegany and Washington Counties	Tom McLoughlin , Representing Special Appointment and Health Care Committee Chair	R. Kevin Brooks , District 7 – Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Howard and Montgomery Counties	Wilbur Levensgood (Caroline County), Representing Maryland Association of Counties	Steve McHenry , Representing Special Appointment	The Honorable Michael W. McKay , Representing Maryland House of Delegates
Angela Spencer , District 2 – Carroll, Frederick and Hartford Counties	Daniel Rider , Representing Rural Maryland Foundation	Donald VanHassent , Representing Maryland Department of Natural Resources	Sharan Marshall , Representing Maryland Association of Public Library Administrators	Mike Thielke , Representing Nonprofits and RMC/RMF Joint Planning Committee Chair	The Honorable Edith Patterson , Representing Maryland House of Delegates
Chris Kaselemis , District 3 – Charles, Calvert and St. Mary's Counties	Ron Studds , Representing For- Profit Organizations	Temi Oshiyoye , Representing Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene	Santo Grande , Representing Maryland Association of Community Action Agencies	Caroline Varney Alvarado , Representing Maryland Department of Housing	The Honorable Mary Ann Lisanti , Representing Maryland House of Delegates
Loretta Lodge , District 4 – Cecil, Kent and Queen Anne's Counties	Vanessa Finney , Representing State At-Large	Dr. Steven Wright , Representing University of Maryland Extension	Lara Wilson , Representing Maryland Rural Health Association	John Douglas Howard (Carroll County), Representing Maryland Association of	The Honorable Thomas M. Middleton , Representing Maryland Senate
Erroll Mattox , District 6– Wicomico, Worcester and Somerset Counties and Representative in Governor's Intergovernmental Commission on Agriculture	Jeannie Haddaway-Ricco , Representing Governor's Office	Craig Hartsock , Representing Western Maryland Resource Conservation and Development	Michael Pennington , Tri-County Council for the Lower Eastern Shore of Maryland and Nominating Committee Chair	John Hartline , Representing Tri- County Council for Southern Maryland Dr. William McGowan , Representing USDA Rural Development	George C. Edwards , Representing Maryland Senate The Honorable James N. Mathias, Jr. , Representing Maryland Senate



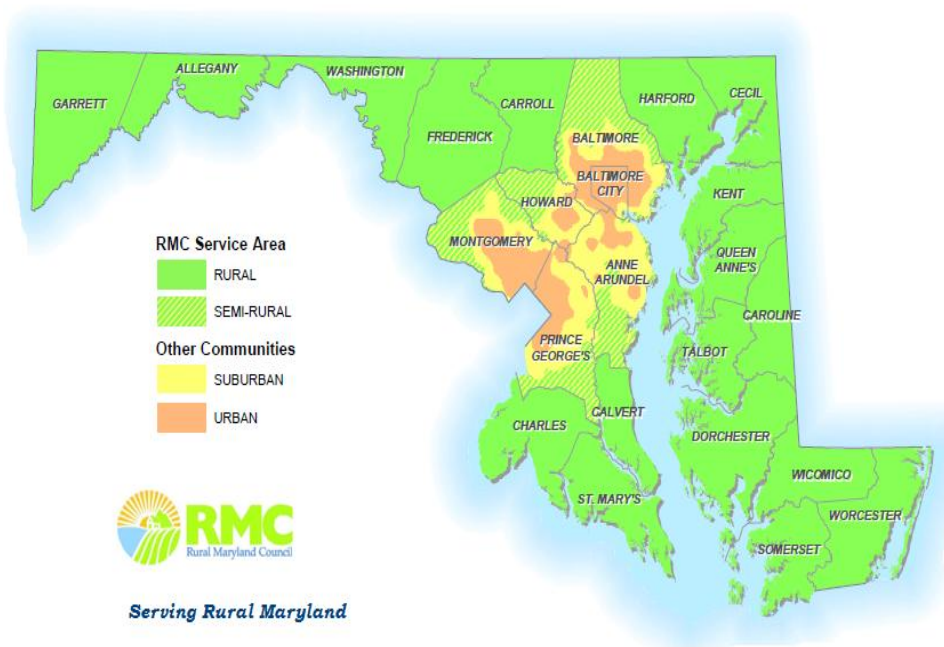
Guest Speaker, Secretary Bartenfelder of the Maryland Department of Agriculture, at the RMC Executive Board Meeting in April 2016.

SERVING RURAL COMMUNITIES

Rural jurisdictions share common characteristics that set them apart from their suburban and urban counterparts, such as geographic isolation, lack of transportation, and lack of access to and availability of health care. The State definition of rural is articulated in the Annotated Code of Maryland, §2-207, and includes 18 of the 24 jurisdictions in Maryland. Each is represented by the Rural Maryland Council.

**The following
counties
constitute rural
Maryland:**

**ALLEGANY
CALVERT
CAROLINE
CARROLL
CECIL
CHARLES
DORCHESTER
FREDERICK
GARRETT
HARFORD
KENT
QUEEN ANNE'S
SOMERSET
ST. MARY'S
TALBOT
WASHINGTON
WICOMICO
WORCESTER**



SERVING RURAL COMMUNITIES

2015 Rural Summit

The Rural Summit was held on December 3, 2015 at the DoubleTree Hotel in Annapolis and drew more than 230 attendees who wanted to share their ideas and concerns about Rural Maryland.

The keynote speaker was Sheila Bair, 28th president of Washington College and former chair of the FDIC. Bair gained national prominence for her leadership during the financial crisis of 2007-2008, and was twice named the second most powerful woman in the world by Forbes magazine. She is Washington College's first female president and the author of several books, including *The Bullies of Wall Street*.

The biannual Summit brought together professionals and grass root individuals from throughout Rural Maryland. Attendees included residents, State and local government leaders, grass root nonprofit organizations that work in rural communities, and professionals representing health care, economic development, agriculture, forestry, workforce development, and community development.

Sessions topics of focus included developing capacity through community building, achieving financial stability, Maryland State Health Improvement Measures (SHIP) as related to activities in rural communities and workforce development, and initiatives by Maryland State agencies to promote agriculture, and housing and community development.

A highlight of the Summit was the Rural Impact Awards Luncheon, recognizing individuals and organizations that have done outstanding work. The following were acknowledged:

- The late Helen Astle, honored for the Outstanding Rural Community Volunteer;
- Tri-County Council of Southern Maryland, honored with the Outstanding Rural Economic Development Award;
- Frederick County Public Schools and MyPlate Garden Program, honored with the Outstanding Rural Community Development Award; and
- Jeannie Haddaway-Riccio, director, Intergovernmental Affairs, Governor's Office, honored with the Rural Champion Award.



*Sheila Bair, 2015 Rural Summit
Keynote Speaker*



*RMC Members at the
2015 Rural Summit in Annapolis*

SERVING RURAL COMMUNITIES

Community Engagement

The Council seeks to actively engage communities to develop solutions to rural challenges. Through information sessions, workshops and other events, community leaders are invited to participate in discussions and identify key action items. The Council accomplishes this through regional meetings of community development organizations, sponsorship of the Eastern Shore Business Plan Competition, and information sessions cohosted with Volunteer Maryland.

In partnership with Community Development Network of Maryland (CD Network), the State's association of community development organizations, the RMC sponsored and supported regional meetings throughout the State. The purpose of these coalitions is to: understand capacity building and training needs, provide resources to meet those needs, and to understand common issues in each region, and work with the coalitions to resolve those issues.

The need for new ventures and their ability to generate new jobs is something on which everyone can agree. One mean of achieving that grand goal is organizing an annual business plan competition. The Eastern Shore Business Competition is designed to advance and expand the entrepreneurial ecosystem of Maryland's Eastern Shore. Currently in its fourth year, the event is organized by the Eastern Shore Entrepreneurship Center with sponsorship by the Rural Maryland Council.

Volunteer Maryland builds stronger, healthier communities by developing volunteer programs with nonprofit organizations, government agencies, and schools. As part of the Governor's Office of Service and Volunteerism, Volunteer Maryland administers an AmeriCorps service training program. Together, during Fiscal Year 2016, RMC and Volunteer Maryland conducted ten information sessions throughout the State. Attendees learned more about both organizations and the resources available to rural-serving organizations, including the Maryland Agricultural Education and Rural Development Assistance Fund (MAERDAF) program.

2017-2020 Strategic Plan

The RMC held a Strategic Plan Board Retreat in April 2016 to discuss the vision of the organization and goals to be accomplished in the future. Stakeholders included the full RMC Executive Board. Four overarching goals were identified and implemented in the plan for achieving future success, including:

- Goal #1: Encourage healthy, connected communities throughout Rural Maryland through convening of stakeholders, education, public relations, and advocacy.
- Goal #2: Support the development and growth of vibrant economies in Rural Maryland.
- Goal #3: Foster stewardship of Maryland's natural resources.
- Goal #4: Maximize RMC outreach, resources and mission through financial and organizational development.

As well, the vision for the RMC was revised and updated to include, *"We see a future where all of Rural Maryland is prosperous with thriving resources, vibrant economies, and healthy, connected communities."* The strategic plan will be implemented beginning calendar year 2017, and the RMC/RMF Joint Planning and Development Committee will be tasked with overseeing strategies and metrics that will accomplish the goals and objectives outlined in the plan. The 2017-2020 Strategic Plan is available to view on the RMC's website at the following link: <http://rural.maryland.gov/publications-2/>

SERVING RURAL COMMUNITIES

RMC Health Care Committee

The RMC Health Care Committee has been active over the years focusing on health care issues such as, work force shortages, rural access to prescription medications, scope of practice regulations and the feasibility of developing a statewide telehealth consortium. The Committee has focused its attention on mental health and its access through the application of telemedicine, particularly, adolescent depression and mood disorders. In the course of these discussions, the Committee has reviewed data indicating that:

- According to a report published by Healthy People 2020, depression is the most common disorder identified in mental illness. It is the leading cause of disability in the work force, is responsible for more than 60% of all suicides each year and contributes to a shortened life span. Currently, suicide is the 3rd leading cause of death for adolescents in both the 10-14 and 15-19 age groups in this country.
- In 2013, the number of adolescents with a major depression episode (MDE) within the past 12 months was 2.6 million (10.7%) which included almost 360,000 who had a co-occurring substance abuse disorder. That number increased to 2.8 million due primarily to the increase in MDE incidents.
- Some studies cite the lack of evaluation for depression in office visits with the primary care physician. One such study stated that only 25% of the physicians surveyed included it despite the recognition by 75% of the respondents that it is a treatable condition.
- From a review of the Mental Health Workforce Availability Chart included in the 2015 MHA report, Maryland's ratio of population per mental health worker was ranked 21st (666:1) and was better than the national average (790:1) as well as its neighboring states excepting Delaware. On the other hand, there is increasing concern regarding the shortages of psychiatrists as services for mental health increase. A recent study initiated by the Mental Health Association of Maryland highlighted that finding. Among its results indicated that only 14% of the 1,154 psychiatrists identified under health reform were accepting new patients and available for appointments within 45 days.
- Nationally, the President Elect of the American Psychiatric Association estimated that the country will need another 30,000 child psychiatrists to augment the current 8,000 in practice to meet the mental health provisions included in the Affordable Care Act. However, the Kaiser Health News reported that lower pay, reimbursement difficulties and paperwork requirements are discouraging more medical students from considering this aspect of practice, which is one of the lower paying specialties in the medical profession.

Based on these findings, the Committee accepted the following short-term goals in focusing on its deliberations:

- Encourage all Primary physicians to include an evaluation for depression in their Private office visits.
- Review and revise roles of School Nurse and Counselor to assist in detecting signs of depression for possible medical attention.
- Develop certification programs in mental health to further enhance ADP's qualifications and offset the recognized physician shortage in addressing and treating or referring adolescents suffering from depression.

The RMC Health Care Committee is expected to wrap up its work at the end of calendar year 2016 and will issue an Executive Summary Report of its activities.

ADVOCATING ON BEHALF OF RURAL MARYLAND

The Council remained active participants during the 2016 Legislative Session. During this time, we worked to advance our legislative priorities and increase our visibility with legislators. Activities included hosting a welcome breakfast for rural legislators, organizing Rural Maryland Day in Annapolis, testifying before standing committees, the Rural Caucus and local delegations as well as submitting written testimony.

The State's Fiscal Year 2017 Operating and Capital budget were passed with bipartisan support. For Fiscal Year 2017, the State's Operating Budget achieves structural balance with budget growth under Spending Affordability guidelines. Growth in total State spending, excluding reserve fund appropriations, is 4.6%. Current budget forecasts indicate that the cash balances in the Rainy Day Fund and the General Fund are sufficient to balance the budget through fiscal 2020. The State's commitment to public schools is maintained with State support over \$6.3 billion. The budget also includes \$19.4 million for five school systems that have lost enrollment and aid in recent years.



Rural Maryland Day Proclamation
February 11, 2016

Rural Maryland Day

February 11, 2016 was proclaimed Rural Maryland Day by Governor Larry Hogan. As stated in the proclamation, "the agricultural, forest, and seafood industries of Maryland continue to support the economies of the rural regions, provide thousands of jobs,... and help to preserve thousands of acres of farm and forest land that contribute to the scenic beauty of our countryside and the protection of soil and water resources."

Members of the Rural Maryland Council met with members of the Maryland General Assembly on issues of importance to rural Maryland. For the first time since its creation in 2006, the Rural Maryland Prosperity Investment Fund (RMPIF) received \$2 million in funding for important investments in rural economic development, entrepreneurship, infrastructure, and health care programs.



RMC Executive Director, Charlotte Davis, and RMC Board Chair, Doris Mason, presented with the Rural Maryland Day Proclamation by Jeannie Haddaway-Riccio of the Governor's Office on Rural Maryland Day 2016.

ADVOCATING ON BEHALF OF RURAL COMMUNITIES

RMC Fiscal Year 2017 Budget Priorities achieved:

- RMC will receive an additional \$2,000,000 in funding for the Rural Maryland Prosperity Investment Fund for a total of \$2,167,000.
- Additionally, the Maryland Agricultural Education and Rural Development Assistance Fund (MAERDAF) is funded at \$167,000.
- The five Regional Councils are funded at \$200,000 each.
- The Maryland Agricultural and Resource-Based Industry Development Corporation (MARBIDCO) is level funded at \$2,875,000

Viable Agriculture, Aquaculture, Forestry & Rural Communities: RMC supported proposals that promote viable agriculture, forestry and rural communities. The Council supported HB 326 – Housing and Community Development – Business Lending and Neighborhood Revitalization which, as passed, expands various programs within the Department of Housing and Community Development so as to enhance financial assistance to businesses. The bill also expands the geographic program area from designated Sustainable Communities to Priority Funding Areas. SB 337- Libraries – Regional, State, and County – Funding enhances library funding by accelerating scheduled increases to the per capita funding amounts that must be provided to the State Library Resource Center, regional resource centers, and county public library systems participating in the State’s library program beginning in Fiscal Year 2018.



Queen Anne's County, Maryland

The Council supported SB 770 which encourages each county board of education, beginning in the 2018-2019 school year, to implement an agriculture science curriculum in either one public high school in the county or in at least one career and technology education center in the county.

We advocated for funding for important land preservation programs. A significant amount of transfer tax funding that otherwise would have been distributed through Program Open Space (POS) and other land preservation programs has been transferred in recent years to help balance the State’s operating budget. HB 462 – Program Open Space – Transfer Tax Repayment – Use of Funds, as signed by the Governor, partially restores previously authorized diversions of POS funds and requires the reimbursement of any future transfers to be repaid over three fiscal years. The law also requires reimbursement of \$90.0 Million transferred to the General Fund in Fiscal Year 2006 which includes \$5.0 million in Fiscal Year 2018 for the Next Generation Farmland Acquisition Program.

ADVOCATING ON BEHALF OF RURAL COMMUNITIES

Further, the budget committees approved funding for:

- Program Open Space – Stateside, \$25,118,428
- Program Open Space – Local, \$21,690,973
- Community Parks and Playgrounds, \$2,500,000
- Rural Legacy Program, \$17,663,385
- Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Program, \$21,227,744

Both the House and Senate passed legislation (SB 840) proposing a reduction of State individual income taxes and expansion of the Earned Income Tax Credit. A conference committee was appointed to reconcile the differences between the two houses, but unfortunately

no agreement was reached by Sine Die. As passed by the Senate, SB 840 decreased State income taxes by reducing over five tax years State income tax rates imposed on higher income taxpayers; expanding the State earned income tax credit that can be claimed by individuals without qualifying children by increasing its value and extending eligibility to individuals who do not currently qualify under federal law; and increasing over four tax years the personal exemption amount that can be claimed by taxpayers with federal adjusted gross income of \$100,000 or less, or \$150,000 or less if married filing jointly.



Leonardtown, St. Mary's County

Rural Health: The Legislature approved RMC-supported legislation to create a tax credit for Preceptors in Areas with Health Care Workforce Shortages. Under SB 411/HB 1494, the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene may issue up to \$100,000 for each of the physician preceptorship credits and nurse practitioner preceptorship credits. Senate Bill 707, also passed, establishes the Workgroup on Rural Health Care Delivery to oversee a study of rural health care needs in Caroline, Dorchester, Kent, Queen Anne's, and Talbot counties. Under SB 707, a licensed general hospital in Kent County may not convert to a freestanding medical facility before July 1, 2020. The General Assembly also passed clarifying legislation expanding the types of providers eligible to be reimbursed for telemedicine services under Medicaid to include primary care providers. (SB 242/HB 886)

Rural Economic Development: We supported several economic development proposals which were considered including SB 737 – Rural Economic Development Program and One Maryland Tax Credit under which businesses in rural counties are eligible for 10 years of property, income, and sales tax benefits. We also supported bills to encourage manufacturing which provided for an income tax credit and an exemption of State income taxes of the qualified wages and salaries paid to employees employed by new or expanding manufacturing entities. None of these bills were approved by the General Assembly.

Transportation: To protect local roadway infrastructure, the State shares various transportation revenues, commonly referred to as Highway User Revenues (HUR), with the counties and municipalities. In FY 2017, \$142.3 million (7.7% of HUR) is distributed to Baltimore City; \$27.7 million (1.5%) is distributed to counties; and \$7.4 million (0.4%) is distributed to municipalities, for a total of \$177.4 million. The Council supported efforts to restore the HUR formula to provide 70% to the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) and 30% to local jurisdictions.

ADVOCATING ON BEHALF OF RURAL COMMUNITIES

Rural Maryland Prosperity Investment Fund (RMPIF)

The primary goal of the Rural Maryland Prosperity Investment Fund is to provide targeted investments to various regional, nonprofit, and educational entities in order to bring rural Maryland's standards of living up to statewide averages. The Governor is authorized, but not required, to include an appropriation in the annual Budget Bill for fiscal years 2008 through 2020.

About one-quarter of Maryland's population live in eighteen rural counties. Many of these communities have higher rates of poverty and unemployment and lower rates of income and educational attainment than their metropolitan and suburban neighbors. Agricultural and resource-based industries continue to support the local economies, but are increasingly under threat from outside competition, land development pressure and regulatory changes. Access to health care providers and services presents additional challenges.

The Rural Maryland Prosperity Investment Fund can offer important targeted investment to promote economic prosperity in Maryland's traditionally disadvantaged and underserved rural communities. By sustaining efforts to promote rural regional cooperation, facilitating entrepreneurial activities and supporting key community colleges and nonprofit providers, the quality of life in rural Maryland can be advanced over the next several years.

Performance Measures for the Rural Maryland Prosperity Investment Fund

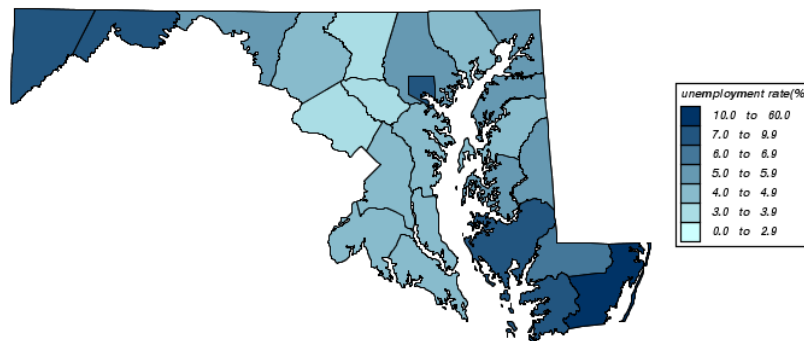
The vision of the Rural Maryland Council and RMPIF is that by the Year 2030, Marylanders living in rural communities are achieving success in education and employment, have access to quality and affordable health care and other vital services, and live in an environment where civic and business entrepreneurship thrives, and where natural and cultural resources are being sustained for future generations. The common perception of Rural Maryland as pleasant, sparsely populated small towns dotting a pastoral landscape of farms and forests tends to mask the reality that many of these communities face serious challenges.

Economic and technological dislocation, and increasingly exurban-type sprawl residential development pose continued challenges. Agricultural and other resource-based industries continue to underpin local economies but are increasingly under threat from national and international competition, and regulatory influences. A lack of affordable, high-speed broadband services puts the more outlying communities at a tremendous economic development disadvantage. And a persistent lack of decent paying job opportunities (and the related local tax base ramifications) places many rural county and municipal governments under great stress as they attempt to meet all the community development and human services needs of their citizens.

It is the hope for this program that RMPIF funding will provide support to produce both short and long term impacts in rural communities and will promote strategic planning by the communities to fund and address their needs. It is also the intent to encourage rural entities to work together in a collaborative fashion. As a way to measure the impact of the State's investment as well as to guide applications and project performance, several key sector measurements will be considered.

Unemployment rates: Maryland's rural areas report the State's highest unemployment rates. As of March 2016, Worcester County reported the highest unemployment rate of 12.4%, almost 8 percentage points above the State's average. The other Lower Shore counties, Somerset and Dorchester, also report the State's next highest unemployment rates followed by the Western Maryland counties of Garrett and Allegany.

ADVOCATING ON BEHALF OF RURAL COMMUNITIES

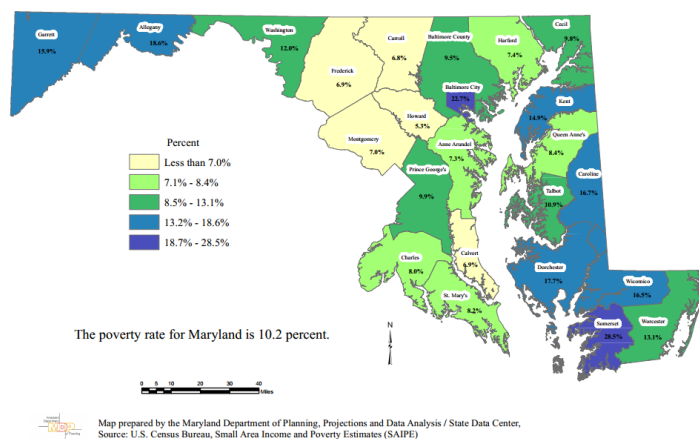


Source: US Department of Labor, Local Area Unemployment Statistics

Additionally, many rural residents must travel outside of their home counties, often great distances. Those rural counties located closest to the suburban core such as Frederick, Carroll and Harford counties, report the highest rate of inter-county commuting. Creating more local jobs in rural counties will improve the quality of life.

Poverty Rates: Rural Maryland reports the State's highest poverty rate in Somerset County (28.3%). Outside of Baltimore City, the majority of the State's poor reside in rural areas.

Percent Population in Poverty for Maryland's Jurisdictions, 2013



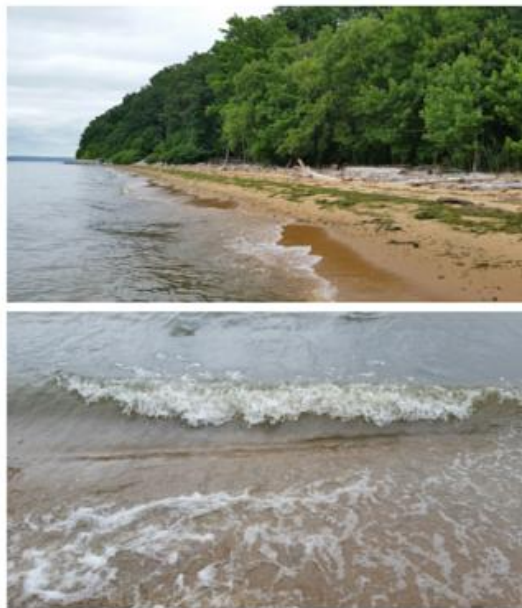
ADVOCATING ON BEHALF OF RURAL COMMUNITIES

Other performance measures for consideration include:

- increased investment in rural regions by private foundations and federal agencies
- reduction of outmigration by rural residents and, in particular, younger populations
- increase of sales and profits to specific industry sectors including agricultural products
- increased delivery of rural broadband
- increased access to and use of telemedicine
- Increased number of clinical encounters with health care providers and diagnostic referrals
- reductions in rural deaths attributed to stroke, heart disease, substance abuse, suicide and chronic diseases such as diabetes
- Increased number of newly created businesses and retention of current businesses
- Increased number of health care providers and retention of current providers

The Rural Maryland Prosperity Investment Fund Committee met April 22, 2016 at the Maryland Department of Agriculture to discuss the guidelines and criteria for the grant program. The RMC Executive Board approved the guidelines and criteria on June 3, 2016.

The Rural Maryland Prosperity Investment Fund supports the Rural Maryland Council's activities and the Maryland Agricultural Education and Rural Development Assistance Fund (MAERDAF) which provides capacity-building funds to rural nonprofit service providers. RMPIF also supports the states' five regional councils, regional infrastructure projects, rural entrepreneurship development, rural community development, and rural health care organizations.



*Summertime in Elk Neck
State Park, Cecil County*

MARYLAND AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE FUND (MAERDAF)

During FY 2016, the MAERDAF Grants Review Board received 57 grant applications requesting a total of \$866,450.75 in funding. The Board selected 16 rural-serving nonprofit organizations to receive \$166,968.00 in available funding. The recipients were:

Allegany College of Maryland – Award Amount: \$25,000

MAERDAF grant funds created and marketed a Sustainability Curriculum to complement existing plant sciences, biotechnology, and forestry programs at the college. Deliverables included the development of an Associate of Science Degree Program in Biology with a focus on sustainability/green science, creation of marketing plan, materials and implementation, and working with universities to develop transfer agreements and business relationships.



Queen Anne's Co and Allegany Co Public Library Guys Read Program

Allegany County Human Resources Development Commission – Award Amount: \$8,638

MAERDAF grant funds provided agency staff with training on the expungement process in Maryland, and to provide a pool of funds for low-income individuals to apply for expungement as a means to help them address this barrier to employment. As a result, 21 agency staff and 84 low-income individuals have received training on the expungement process.

Asian American Center of Frederick – Award Amount: \$6,500

Through MAERDAF funding, AACF will offer preventative health services, follow-up case management and health education in a culturally sensitive manner by conducting outreach, education, follow-up and coordination of health-related services and events to Frederick and neighboring counties with the assistance of a Volunteer Maryland Volunteer Coordinator. During their 8th Annual Frederick Community Health Fair approximately 1,000 community members received health screenings, flu vaccinations, Hepatitis B testing, referrals, education, and coaching. AACF succeeded in serving 2,663 community members and provided them with 22,954 health education materials and messages. Of the 2,663 community members served, 1,469 (approximately 55%) community members represent a diverse range of minority populations.

Calvert County Farm Bureau – Award Amount: \$7,075

Through this funding opportunity, the Calvert County Farm Bureau hosted a one-day young and beginning farmer Leadership Conference workshop in spring 2016. The workshop taught effective speaking and advocacy skills. Funds were used for providing a venue, guest speakers, and other provisions for a successful event. The Leadership Conference was held at the College of Southern Maryland Prince Frederick Campus and received 35 participants and 14 guest speakers.

MARYLAND AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE FUND (MAERDAF)

Chesapeake Leadership Foundation, Inc., – Award Amount: \$8,000

MAERDAF grant funds were provided to complete strategic planning, board recruitment strategies, and board government analysis to continue the work of the Chesapeake Leadership Foundation and its program, Shore Leadership. Specifically, the Foundation developed strategies to protect the program's longevity, measure program deliverables, and to evaluate the program's success.

Chesapeake Multicultural Resource Center – Award Amount: \$ 10,000

The MAERDAF grant funds improved services to already established clients, broadened the type of service provided to each client focusing on employment, legal services, health and education, and monitor and track the improvements to standards of living in clients after receiving assistance from Chesapeake Multicultural Resource Center. As a result, 50 orientated case files for families have been created and 406 clients have been served; 26 community members have enrolled in Choptank Community Health and 50 families have used services to enroll in Medicaid.

Crossroads Community, Inc. – Award Amount: \$4,875

Crossroads Community utilized MAERDAF grant funds for a Volunteer Coordinator obtained through Volunteer Maryland to expand the program of community support volunteers and to cultivate community partnerships.

Eastern Shore Entrepreneurship Center – Award Amount: \$17,841

MAERDAF grant funds were provided to conduct Accelerate DELMARVA entrepreneurship workshops to offer technical assistance and mentoring to start-up businesses on the Eastern Shore. Accelerate DELMARVA provided 63 hours of preparation, execution, and outside classroom mentoring.

Frederick County Career and Technology Center FFA Alumni, Inc., and Frederick Community College – Award Amount: \$24,889

MAERAF grant funds assisted with the development of an agricultural entrepreneurship education program that will include college coursework in entrepreneurship and agricultural business, individual study of chosen project area, and project (business) execution. Ten students successfully completed the program in spring 2016.



Frederick Career and Tech Center and FFA Alumni Bee Hives.

MARYLAND AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE FUND (MAERDAF)

LEAD Maryland Foundation, Inc. – Award Amount: \$10,000

Through this grant funding opportunity, MAERDAF grant funds assisted with the implementation of seminars for Fellows in LEAD Class IX (2015-2016) to purchase meeting/conference space, hotel rooms, meals, professional trainers and instructors, and teaching materials for Seminars V and VI. A total of 24 Fellows were accepted into the LEAD Class IX.

MAC Incorporated – Award Amount: \$8,000

MAERDAF grant funding assisted with the creation of a Healing Rose Garden to serve women in rural communities on the Eastern Shore of Maryland, and to address the significant health issues of breast and gynecological cancer and survivorship of women in these communities who are underserved, underinsured and often financially vulnerable. The garden offers space for 24 survivors to have their own garden plots, as well as several community beds that will provide food for all of the garden participants and other survivors who come to the program in need of healthy food on an urgent basis to support them in their health needs.

Maryland Association of Soil Conservation Districts – Award Amount: \$2,500

The Maryland Association of Soil Conservation Districts utilized MAERDAF grant funding for the execution of county and State Envirothon competitions, including funding for administrative staff support and facility rental. In 2016, 20 of 23 counties held an Envirothon event, and over 1,100 students participated statewide in the Envirothon.

Mid-Shore Regional Council – Award Amount: \$3,500

MAERDAF Funding provided support for Women in Agriculture Wednesday Webinars to learn, network and share Ag education ideas online. The Women in Agriculture program is a statewide network of farmers, professionals, educators and those that want to farm. There were 20 webinars conducted from September 1 to June 30 with 1,480 registrants.

Queen Anne's County Library/Allegany County Library – Award Amount: \$9,900

MAERDAF Funds provided for the implementation of the Guys Read program through the purchase of eight titles of books for fourth grade boys in the school media centers in the elementary schools in Queen Anne's and Allegany Counties. Staff of the Allegany and Queen Anne's County Public Libraries recruited and trained over 50 volunteer men who visited schools to promote the reading as a fun activity. A total of 92 visits were made to six elementary schools in each of the participating counties. A total of 416 4th grade students chose to give up their regular lunchtime activities to be read to by volunteers.

Tri-County Council for Southern MD – Award Amount: \$11,900

Through this funding opportunity, ten future business owners were allowed to participate in an intensive, hands-on business development boot camp that provides tools and resources strategically aligned to accelerate the path to business ownership and success. During the program, nine jobseekers successfully completed the ten week entrepreneurship training program through the Small Business Development Center (SBDC) at the College of Southern Maryland.

MARYLAND AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE FUND (MAERDAF)

Western Maryland Area Health Education Center – Award Amount: \$8,350

MAERDAF grant funds provided support to Exploring Careers in Health Occupations (ECHO), a highly interactive, multi-year, STEM-based summer residential program that provides inter-professional healthcare experiences to rising 10th through 12th grade high school students, in Garrett, Allegany and Washington Counties, who are interested in pursuing health careers through a number of learning activities in collaboration with local health professionals, high schools, universities, hospitals, health departments, and private practitioners.



Pictured: *Top*, LEAD Maryland Fellows Class IX; *Right*, MAC, Inc. garden plots; *Lower Right*, Chesapeake Multicultural Resource Center. *Bottom*, Maryland Association of Soil Conservation Districts Envirothon 2015; *Lower Left*, MAC, Inc. garden plots; *Left*, Asian American Center of Frederick.

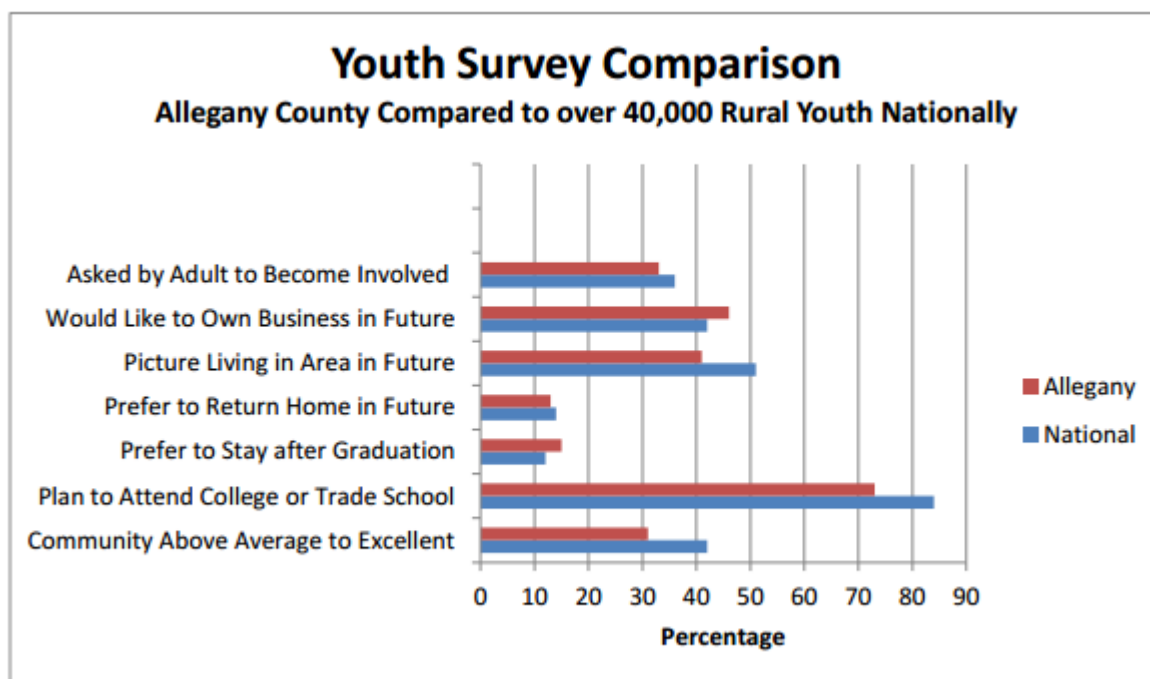


YOUTH ENGAGEMENT AND ASSESSMENT INITIATIVE

We continued with our youth engagement project by focusing on Allegany County. A final youth assessment report was produced December 2015, and documented the activities and outcomes of the youth assessment project conducted in Allegany County, MD by Bridges to Opportunity. Participating schools included Braddock, Mount Savage, Washington, and Westmar Middle Schools; Allegany, Fort Hill, and Mountain Ridge High Schools, and Calvary Christian Academy, Lighthouse Christian Academy and Bishop Walsh Private Schools.

In the fall 2015, 1,088 7th and 9th grade students in public and private schools participated in an online survey to measure their perceptions of their community, future education and career plans, and desire to live in the local area in the future. The survey was administered in classroom environments with supervision. 48% of survey respondents were 7th grade students and 52% were 9th grade students. Overall, females represented 49.6% and males 50.4% of total participants.

The youth focus groups included over 250 representative middle school and high school students. The focus group participants worked in small groups of students to discuss their current likes and dislikes regarding their communities, and their vision for what they wanted their communities to be like in 10-20 years if they were to stay or return as young adults.



Graphics Courtesy of Nancy Forlifer

The full report is available on the Rural Maryland Council's website at <http://rural.maryland.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2014/08/Youth-Engagement-Allegany-Co-2015-Brief.pdf>

RURAL MARYLAND FOUNDATION

The Rural Maryland Foundation organized screenings of the documentary “Farmland” around the State as part of its outreach activities and to showcase the short film produced in Fiscal Year 2014 “Rural Aspirations.” The short film is available to view at the Foundation’s webpage: www.ruralmdfoundation.org, or on the Foundation’s YouTube channel. We invite all Marylanders to share their aspirations by taking a brief survey at ruralmdaspirations.com.

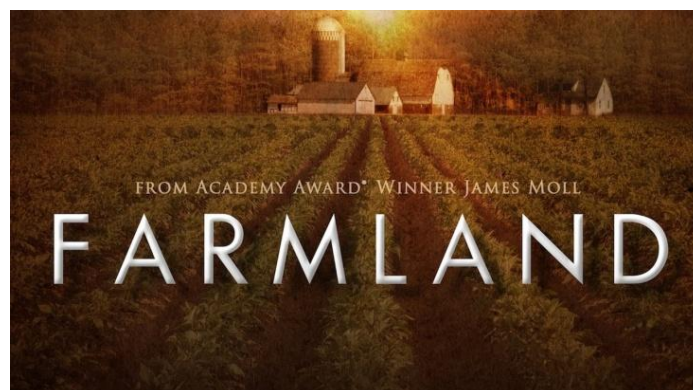
“Farmland” is a documentary, created by award-winning director James Moll, which takes an intimate look at the lives of farmers and ranchers and their passion for a way of life that has been passed down from generation to generation, yet continues to evolve. The film provides a window into the experiences of six young farmers and ranchers, and takes a personal look at what it means to be involved in farming and agriculture today.

The screening tour kicked-off at the 2015 Chesapeake Film Festival on September 19th at the Easton Premier Cinemas, which included a short panel discussion with local farmers and a reception.

On March 2, 2016, a second screening was co-hosted with the Caroline Chamber of Commerce in Denton, MD at the Caroline County Public Library. A third screening was co-hosted with the Maryland Agricultural Education Foundation in Cockeysville, MD on April 7, 2016. The Foundation is continuing the screenings for Fiscal Year 2017 in Mt. Airy and Thurmont, MD.



The Rural Maryland Foundation is a 501(c)(3) organization formed in 2001 to support the work of the Rural Maryland Council. All contributions to the Foundation are tax deductible and may be sent to: Rural Maryland Foundation, Post Office Box 1544, Annapolis, Maryland 21404. More information on the Foundation can be found at: ruralmdfoundation.org.



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Farm in Taneytown, Carroll County

